MARVEL LEGACY
PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE
220
THE PUNISHER
ROSENBERG
VILANOVA
LOUGHRIDGE

MARVEL COMICS
PROUDLY PRESENTS:

FRANK CASTLE WAS A DECORATED MARINE, AN UPSTANDING CITIZEN, AND A FAMILY MAN. THEN HIS FAMILY WAS TAKEN FROM HIM WHEN THEY WERE ACCIDENTALLY KILLED IN A BRUTAL MOB HIT. FROM THAT DAY, HE BECAME A FORCE OF COLD, CALCULATED RETRIBUTION AND VIGILANTISM. FRANK CASTLE DIED WITH HIS FAMILY. NOW, **THERE IS ONLY...**

THE PUNISHER

FRANK CASTLE IN PUNISHER: WAR MACHINE PART THREE

CHERNAYA, A ROGUE STATE IN EASTERN EUROPE, IS OPERATING UNDER THE MILITARY REGIME OF GENERAL PETROV. PETROV WAS ABLE TO TAKE POWER USING RESOURCES AND PERSONNEL FROM A FORMER S.H.I.E.L.D. OUTPOST, SET UP IN SECRET BY NICK FURY, THAT WENT SOUR AFTER THE GLOBAL SPY ORGANIZATION WENT UNDER. NICK FURY'S GOT A PROBLEM—FRANK CASTLE IS THE SOLUTION. FURY FILLED CASTLE IN ON THE SITUATION AND LED HIM TO THE HARDWARE THAT'S GOING TO ENABLE HIM TO STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THIS LARGE-SCALE THREAT—THE WAR MACHINE ARMOR! NEWLY EQUIPPED, THE PUNISHER HAS DRAWN FIRST BLOOD AGAINST THE REGIME, BUT THE WAR IS JUST BEGINNING...

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SOMEWHERE IN CHERNAYA.
<PLEASE, NO! TOMIK IS A GOOD BOY! HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.>*
<WHAT KIND OF MEN COME AND TAKE A WOMAN'S ONLY SON?>
<IT'S OKAY, MOTHER. IT'S OKAY.>
*TRANSLATED FROM CHERNAYAN.
<WE'RE TAKING YOUR SON FOR RE-EDUCATION.>
<WE'RE ONLY INTERESTED IN THE YOUNG AND ABLE-BODIED, OLD HAG, WHICH MEANS YOU KEEP YELLING AND I CAN SHOOT YOU IN THE STREET LIKE THE-->
SKRUNCH

DON'T.
I HAVE ONE QUESTION. ANSWER IT AND YOU GET TO WALK AWAY. WHERE IS PETROV?
SCREW YOU, AMERICAN.
WRONG ANSWER.
YAAAA--
WARNING-- HE CANNOT SURVIVE TRAVELING AT THESE SPEEDS WITHOUT PROTECTION.
IS THAT RIGHT?
--AAAAAHH!

I... I'M JUST LOOKING FOR A KEY.
WHAT WAS ALL THIS ABOUT?
PETROV'S NEW "MORALITY" LAWS. MOTHER THINKS I WAS TARGETED FOR BEING AN INTELLECTUAL. SHE ALSO THINKS MY BOYFRIEND IS MY TUTOR...
KLINK
SHE HASN'T CAUGHT UP WITH THE LAST SOCIAL REVOLUTION. NO POINT IN TELLING HER WE'RE GOING BACKWARDS NOW.
<WAIT! ROBOT MAN! DO YOU EAT?>
MY MOTHER WANTS TO KNOW IF YOU EAT FOOD UNDER THERE.
I CAN'T TAKE THAT.
SHE WILL BE OFFENDED.
YOU'RE SAVING OUR COUNTRY. IT IS AN HONOR TO FEED YOU.
<OOH. I SEE WHY HE WEARS THE HELMET.>
I'M NOT HERE TO SAVE YOUR COUNTRY.
ARE YOU HERE TO BREAK AN OLD WOMAN'S HEART?
FINE. WHAT IS THIS?
HURKA. IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.
IT'S NOT FOR ANYONE.
SPITOO
YOU MAY NOT BE HERE TO SAVE CHERNAYA, BUT YOU SAVED ME. IF MAYBE YOU WANT TO SAVE OTHER PEOPLE, INNOCENT PEOPLE...

"...I CAN SHOW YOU WHERE THE SOLDIERS TAKE THEM."
WAIT HERE.
THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS AND OPEN THE GATES.
THIS IS JOKE?
NO.

HA! HA! THERE IS A BATTALION OF CHERNAYA'S BEST--
KA-BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
KRNCH

SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.
BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG
P-TING
P-TING
P-TING
P-TING

BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG
<IF WE'RE GOING TO DIE, LET US TAKE AS MANY OF THESE SUBHUMAN PRISONERS WITH US AS WE CAN! FOR CHERN-->
BLAM
<NOT GONNA DIE HERE...>

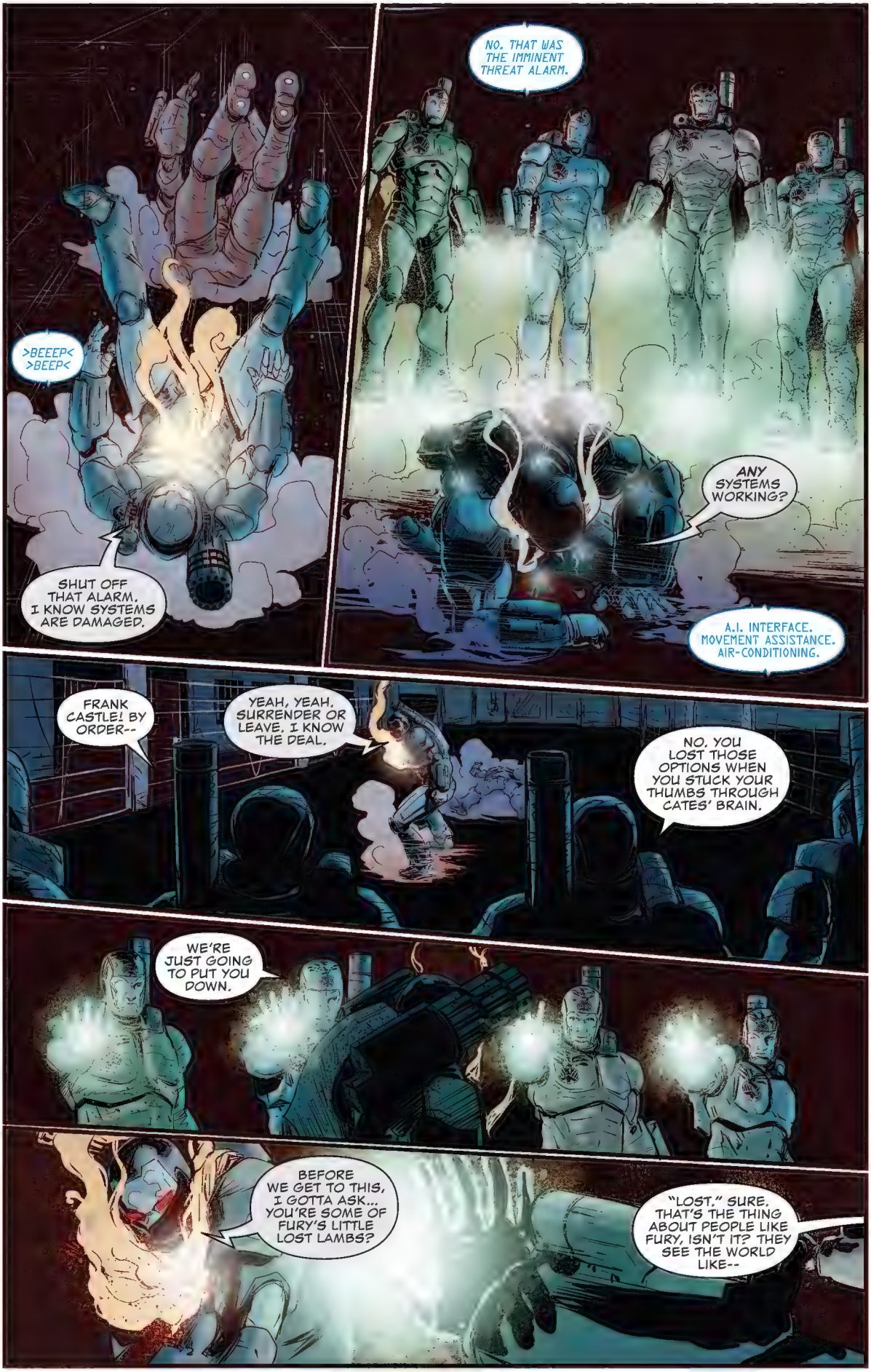
PLEASE! I'LL GIVE YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT.
WHERE'S PETROV?
NOBODY KNOWS. HE--
BLAST
THREATS NEUTRALIZED.
YOU'RE ALL FREE. GO HOME.
ARE YOU FREEING ALL THE CAMPS?!
THERE ARE MORE?
WELL, IF I CAN'T FIND PETROV, THEN I'LL MAKE HIM COME TO ME.

WHERE IS EVERYONE?
NO SIGNS OF HUMAN LIFE PRESENT.
THEY LEFT IN A HURRY. ARMOR, CAN YOU--
BLAST

HIGH-IMPACT CLOSE-RANGE ENERGY CONTACT DETECTED.
I NOTICED.
FRANK CASTLE. BY ORDER OF THE CHERNAYAN GOVERNMENT, YOU ARE ASKED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY IMMEDIATELY OR SURRENDER YOURSELF TO ME.
YOU DON'T SOUND CHERNAYAN.
I'M FROM ARIZONA. YA KNOW, I WAS ACTUALLY A BIG FAN OF YOURS, MAN. BUT I GOT A JOB TO DO HERE. SO WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?
I THINK YOU KNOW.
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT.

YOU CAN BARELY OPERATE THAT SUIT, HUH, OLD MAN?
I'M YOUNGER, BETTER TRAINED, AND ON SUPERIOR EQUIPMENT THAN YOURS, CASTLE.
BUT PLEASE FEEL FREE TO KEEP THIS GOING. IT'S FUN.

CLIPPED YOUR ARC REACTOR WITH THAT ONE. LUCKY SHOT.
>BEEP< REBOOTING WEAPONS AND REPULSOR SYSTEMS--
DON'T TELL ME. JUST DO IT.
YOUR ARMOR IS GOING TO TAKE MINUTES TO REBOOT, FRANK. YOU DON'T HAVE THAT.
IT'S A SHAME. YOU'RE A SOLDIER.
YOU SHOULD'VE KNOWN NOT TO USE EQUIPMENT YOU AREN'T TRAINED ON, BUT I GUESS OLD PEOPLE FORGET THAT STUFF.
YOU YOUNG GUYS NEVER LEARN.
GET OFF!
EQUIPMENT DOESN'T MATTER. ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS...
SKRNCH
GAHH!
...A WILLINGNESS TO DO WHAT THE OTHER GUY WON'T.


>BEEEP<
>BEEP<
SHUT OFF THAT ALARM. I KNOW SYSTEMS ARE DAMAGED.
NO. THAT WAS THE IMMINENT THREAT ALARM.
ANY SYSTEMS WORKING?
A.I. INTERFACE. MOVEMENT ASSISTANCE. AIR-CONDITIONING.
FRANK CASTLE! BY ORDER--
YEAH, YEAH. SURRENDER OR LEAVE. I KNOW THE DEAL.
NO. YOU LOST THOSE OPTIONS WHEN YOU STUCK YOUR THUMBS THROUGH CATES' BRAIN.
WE'RE JUST GOING TO PUT YOU DOWN.
BEFORE WE GET TO THIS, I GOTTA ASK... YOU'RE SOME OF FURY'S LITTLE LOST LAMBS?
"LOST." SURE. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE FURY, ISN'T IT? THEY SEE THE WORLD LIKE--

REPULSORS ONLINE.
GOOD.
ARGH!
LIKELIHOOD OF A SUCCESSFUL FRONTAL ASSAULT IS 3%.
WHAT'S THE LIKELIHOOD I CAN KILL THIS GUY, THOUGH?
22%.
I'LL TAKE IT.
GET HIM OFF ME!!!

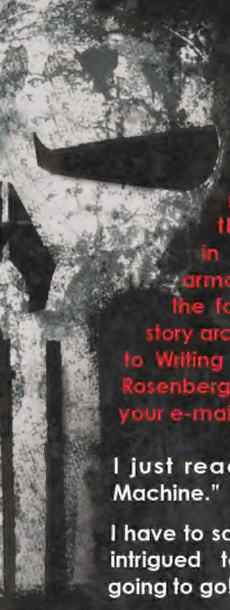
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
CATASTROPHIC FAILURE IMMINENT. SUGGEST IMMEDIATE--
IS HE STILL ALIVE?
YES.
GIVE ME AS MUCH POWER ON THIS NEXT PUNCH AS YOU CAN.
HIS VITAL FUNCTIONS HAVE CEASED.
CAN WE STILL FLY?
YES.
WHAM
UNBELIEVABLE.
AFTER HIM!

MULTIPLE HOSTILES IN PURSUIT AND GAINING.
ARMOR, WE GOT ANYTHING LEFT TO THROW AT THEM?
YOU COULD TRY YOUR HELMET.
I DON'T LIKE JOKES.
ANY CHANCE WE CAN OUTRUN THEM?
0.3%.
OKAY, I WANT YOU TO INITIATE EMERGENCY AIR BREAK...
NOW!
WHAM

INCOMING! INITIATING EVASIVE--
KABLAAM
YOU THINK CASTLE SURVIVED THAT?
I'VE GOT NO POWER READINGS AT ALL.
IF HE'S ALIVE NOW, HE'LL BE ASPHYXIATING IN HIS SUIT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN IN A MINUTE. NO...

"...WE JUST KILLED THE PUNISHER."

FRANK ANSWERS



The only thing more explosive than Frank's run in the War Machine armor so far has been the fan response to our story arc! We'll turn this over to Writing Machine Matthew Rosenberg to answer some of your e-mails!

I just read "Punisher War Machine."

I have to say I am completely intrigued to see where it's going to go!!

I was first introduced to Frank Castle in 2004 when he was played by Thomas Jane. I played the movie on repeat and found myself relating to Frank more and more. Well, I haven't lost my family or anything, just that anguish that he felt and the desire for revenge!!

I'm going to keep this short!

Since then I tried to digest as much Punisher as I could and then, like Matthew Rosenberg, lost interest in the Punisher and comics in general. With the new TV series I figured it was time to look into the Punisher again, and I have to admit, I am completely OVERWHELMED with how crazy and incredible he has become!

This latest story arc is going to be epic and I can't wait!! Keep up the dope work and keep it coming! I feel like Jon Bernthal would be proud!

Elroy
NSW, Australia

MATTHEW: Our first letter and it's from Australia? Pretty cool. Hey, Elroy. Thanks so much for writing in and for picking up the book. I have a special place in my heart for folks who "rediscover" comics and I'm happy we can play a small part in that. And for Punisher fans, what a good time to be back. PUNISHER MAX: THE PLATOON has been great, the Netflix series is super fun and we're just getting started with our own brand of chaos.

I feel safe in saying I think Thomas Jane, Ray Stevenson and Dolph Lundgren would have enjoyed your letter!

Hi there,
I've been a fan of the Punisher for a long time. Writers and artists have always done justice to the character, giving us an action-packed premise and adding emotional depth from time to time. And now I'm looking forward to what the future holds for Mr. Castle.

PUNISHER #218 (boy, it's great to see high numbering!) was a ball to read. It had the right mixture of action and character-driven stuff. Seeing the Punisher take out the bad guys was compelling, but equally compelling was Punisher's meeting with Nick Fury. What will the future hold? Who knows? I do think, over many decades, various writers have done a great job of keeping the Punisher contemporary. How do they do justice to a character who is driven by revenge and a desire to see justice done? Is he the easiest character to write? Who knows? All I do know is that #218 featured a Punisher who was both true to what had come before, but with 2017 relevance. I am sure 2018 will give us many twists and turns in the life of Mr. Castle.

I was never 100% convinced that Punisher should remain a part of the mainstream Marvel Universe. In a world of gods, sorcerers and super-powered villains, it could, just a tad, be a little jarring at times seeing Mr. Castle occupying that world. That said, I wouldn't change anything. I'm glad that Punisher has always been a part of the Marvel Universe in one form or another.

What of super villains? I'd love to see Punisher go toe-to-toe with the likes of Kraven, Magneto, Red Skull and many others. I think having Punisher taking on super villains risks stretching suspension of disbelief to breaking point, but there is a precedent for such scenarios, e.g. Punisher taking on Doctor Doom. I would not object to seeing him take on all sorts of super villains, although it's probably best not to overdo any idea.

I look forward to the character soaring high as we enter 2018 very soon.

Stephen Parry
Birmingham
United Kingdom

MATTHEW: Hey, Stephen. The UK, huh? Nice that we've got so many readers overseas. I tend to think of the Punisher as a very "American" phenomena, but I'm happy to be proven wrong. So you asked a bunch of questions, they are probably rhetorical, but I'm going to answer them anyway because otherwise you're just saying nice things for me to react to. And that is awkward.

"What does the future hold?" A lot of explosions and violence.

"Who knows?" Me, the editors, the art team, some of the press and production people, and my girlfriend who wishes I would shut up about the Punisher.

"Is he the easiest character to write?" No. I think he's often a pretty difficult character because he is pretty quiet and keeps to himself, but has a set of rules that most readers understand. Challenging those rules and surprising readers is the real trick, and it's not easy.

"What of super villains?" I like this question because it has a sort of Shakespearian cadence to it. Anyway, I like the idea of Frank in the armor going up against all those guys. Well, maybe not Magneto because that would not go well for Frank, but the rest for sure. We have some ideas.

Don't let anyone tell you the Punisher doesn't belong on our shelves anymore. That he's outdated or not PC. The Punisher is representative of our darker nature. He straddles that line of hero/villain. He is a character and a warning that taking the concept of justice and warping it for our own sense of right/wrong, causes nothing but bloodshed and pain. His is a cautionary tell that I think is always worth telling. Looking forward to the ride. Issue #218 was a great start.

I look forward to more.

All the best,
James Halcomb

MATTHEW: Hi, James. I agree 100%. I think even the most terrifying monsters are worth exploring in fiction. The point of most art is to

help us explore and understand things that are separate from our own experiences or at least separate from our perspective on them. I think everyone is better served reading, watching and consuming ideas that challenge their point of view sometimes. The trouble with the Punisher comes from the fact that he is so complex in his simplicity. He can so easily be categorized as a hero or as a villain that he lends himself to oversimplification. People see the aspects they want and throw away the rest. They make him into one simple thing so they can celebrate or condemn, but the Punisher always breaks those expectations and assumptions, and defies such simple categorizations. What it amounts to is the same in the pages of the book as it is in the real world: underestimating Frank Castle is a very bad idea.

OMG....OMG, what more can I say, just got finished reading PUNISHER #218 and I LOVED it as well as Matthew Rosenberg's write-up in the back of the book—I thought I was reading my own thoughts (of course with the difference of him being from NYC and I'm from Canada). But it's true, since I've been collecting comics Frank Castle has always been my main man. You want to talk about a "no filter" kinda guy well then you best look Frank's way. Anyway I just want to say love the new direction the character is going and looking forward to more Punisher goodness because I know it's going to be one hell of a ride and trust me I'm strapped in and ready to go, baby!

Frank Yersh III
Montreal, Quebec

MATTHEW: Thanks so much, Frank! Yersh is a really good last name, by the way. It's just fun to say. Anyway, I'm glad you appreciated the book and my little manifesto thing in the back of it. I sort of touched upon this earlier, but one of my favorite things about writing is the idea that it can open up a conversation with people from all different backgrounds and walks of life if done well. Australians. Brits. Canadians. You name it. But it's also nice to talk to someone who thinks just like you. It's egotistical to a really weird degree, but I don't really care. So, thanks, Frank! Glad you found the book.

I've been away from Frank Castle for many years but admit the concept of him acquiring the War Machine armor intrigued me. Thankfully, due to that curiosity I picked up PUNISHER #218. Outstanding read. It's obvious writer Matthew Rosenberg gets this character and realizes what makes him tick. The art by Guiu Vilanova was so outstanding as to match the script. This book also carries a vibe similar to the Ennis/Dillon material I love. Hats off to everyone involved and I'm back in the van...er...that didn't sound right but you get my drift.

David "L.D." Schultz

MATTHEW: Hey, David. I honestly think there is no greater joy for a writer than hearing a reader say that their work brought them back to a character or to comics or what have you. So thank you, sincerely. And to compare our book to the Ennis/Dillon material is about as high praise as you can give me. I think we are going to a very different place with the character, but I'd be lying if I didn't say that those books weren't a huge influence in how I approach the Punisher in specific but also writing in general. And if you're reading this and haven't picked up any of Garth Ennis' Punisher comics you are missing out on some of the best comics in the world. You should run to your local comic shop right now and buy those collections. We'll wait.

I love comics, but Punisher is definitely my most collected of the bunch. Reading this new PUNISHER, with Rosenberg, Vilanova and Loughridge at the helm. I can just feel that this is being done by fans of the character. I really enjoy the art here, and Frank's writing is just great in that issue. I got a poster of the cover of this issue for my place, and I'm ready for more. Quick question: What would you say your favourite Punisher moment is from what you've read? Thanks, and keep killing it! At the comics, of course.

Casey Roth
ON, Canada

MATTHEW: Do any Americans read PUNISHER? Thanks, Casey. And you have a poster of our first issue?

That's so cool. I want a poster. Jake, how do I get a poster?

As for a favorite Punisher moment of all time? Geez. I have a lot. I'll be vague because I don't want to spoil stuff. I want people to go out and find the stories themselves but my top 5 in no particular order:

5. The Punisher waiting to kill Stilt-Man on Christmas from PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #26.

4. Captain America finds out who the Punisher really is in CIVIL WAR #6.

3. The end of "The Slavers" story arc.

2. Daredevil being given a choice by the Punisher in the Ennis/Dillon PUNISHER #3.

1. The Punisher deciding to help Daredevil in the DAREDEVIL story "The Devil in Cell Block D."

Dear Frank Answers,
Issue #218 was awesome! The idea of Frank getting the War Machine armor was an excellent decision and I can't think of a better way for him to step up his game. Guiu Vilanova's art stands out as some of the best that Marvel has seen in a while and I can't wait to see where the Punisher will go next!

Ethan Bates
Covington, LA

MATTHEW: Thanks, Ethan! I'm glad you like Guiu's art. I'm pretty blown away by it every time I see a page as well. And of course Lee Loughridge's brilliant colors only add to that. I'm working hard to make sure these guys get a lot of crazy #$!% to draw so check back in every month.

And as we've all seen, where the Punisher goes next is STRAIGHT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA! Is there a chance he survived? Will the War Machine armor rust down there? Find out next month!

NEXT

SEND LETTERS TO **MHEROES@MARVEL.COM**, BE SURE TO MARK THEM "**OKAY TO PRINT.**"